

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee

BILL: SB 316

INTRODUCER: Senator Constantine

SUBJECT: Vietnam Veterans/High School Diplomas

DATE: February 9, 2009

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Carrouth	Matthews	ED	Favorable
2.	Pardue	Skelton	MS	Favorable
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

Senate Bill 316 authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans of the Vietnam Era who did not complete their graduation requirements. The State Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner, may develop criteria and guidelines for awarding the diplomas.

This bill amends section 1003.43 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Section 1003.43, F.S., establishes the general requirements for receiving a standard high school diploma; however, this provision allows the commissioner to award a standard high school diploma to certain veterans who served in World War II and the Korean War, respectively, and were unable to complete their diploma requirements due to their service. To date, the Department of Education has issued 523 diplomas to Korean War veterans.¹

In particular, the Commissioner of Education may award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged World War II veterans who:

- Began high school between 1937 and 1946 and were scheduled to graduate between 1941 and 1950;
- Were inducted into the U.S. Armed Forces between September 1940 and December 1946; and

¹ Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2009

- Served prior to completing the necessary high school graduation requirements.

Likewise, the Commissioner of Education may award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans of the Korean War who:

- Began high school between 1946 and 1950 and were scheduled to graduate between 1949 and 1955;
- Were inducted into the U.S. Armed Forces between June 1949 and January 1955; and
- Served during the Korean War prior to completing the necessary high school graduation requirements.

In the absence of this law, a veteran who had been inducted and served in World War II and the Korean War prior to completing all high school graduation requirements would not receive a standard high school diploma unless he had returned to school after his military service and completed all requirements.

Section 1.01(14), F.S., establishes February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975, as the Vietnam Era for the authorization of veterans' benefits, as well as other uses under the law. These dates are consistent with Federal law for purposes of determining veterans' benefits.

Male registrants were subject to induction into the military through their local Draft Boards during all three periods, i.e. World War II, Korea, and the Vietnam Era. On December 1, 1969, the first Selective Service draft lottery since 1942 was conducted in order to call registrants for induction in 1970. Registrants born between January 1, 1944 and December 31, 1950 were eligible in that lottery. Subsequent lotteries were held in 1970, 1971, and 1972. A registrant who was classified as available immediately for military service(1-A) could accept the call for induction or apply for a student deferment if eligible. A high school student may have induction postponed until graduation or age 20.²

More than 1.8 million men nationwide were inducted during the Vietnam Era.³ Twenty-one percent of males who served in Vietnam had less than a high school education.⁴ Women who served in the military during the Vietnam Era were volunteers and not subject to the draft. The number of Floridians who were inducted or who volunteered for service prior to high school graduation is unknown.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill authorizes the Commissioner of Education to award a standard high school diploma to honorably discharged veterans who were inducted into the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era before completing their high school graduation requirements. This bill would afford Vietnam Era servicemembers the same opportunity for a high school diploma as those who served in World War II and the Korean War.

² U. S. Selective Service System, <http://www.sss.gov>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Mobile Riverine Force Association, <http://www.mrfa.org/vnstats.htm>.

The bill authorizes the State Board of Education to develop criteria and guidelines for the award of the diplomas. Although this provision mirrors current law with respect to veterans of other conflicts, it is not clear why the law is permissive. If a servicemember is eligible under the criteria established in law, he or she should get the diploma. Additionally, the bill appears to authorize the State Board to establish criteria without any guidelines established in law. If the State Board establishes additional criteria beyond the statutory requirements, the criteria could be challenged as an unlawful delegation of law. It may be prudent for the Legislature to specify what guidelines the State Board may adopt and require the adoption of the guidelines in rule.

The bill provides for the act to take effect on July 1, 2009.

Other Potential Implications:

None.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Department of Education indicates that they may experience a slight workload increase if diplomas are granted to Vietnam Era veterans and that minimal costs associated with producing and mailing the diplomas would be met within existing budgets.⁵

⁵ Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2009

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
